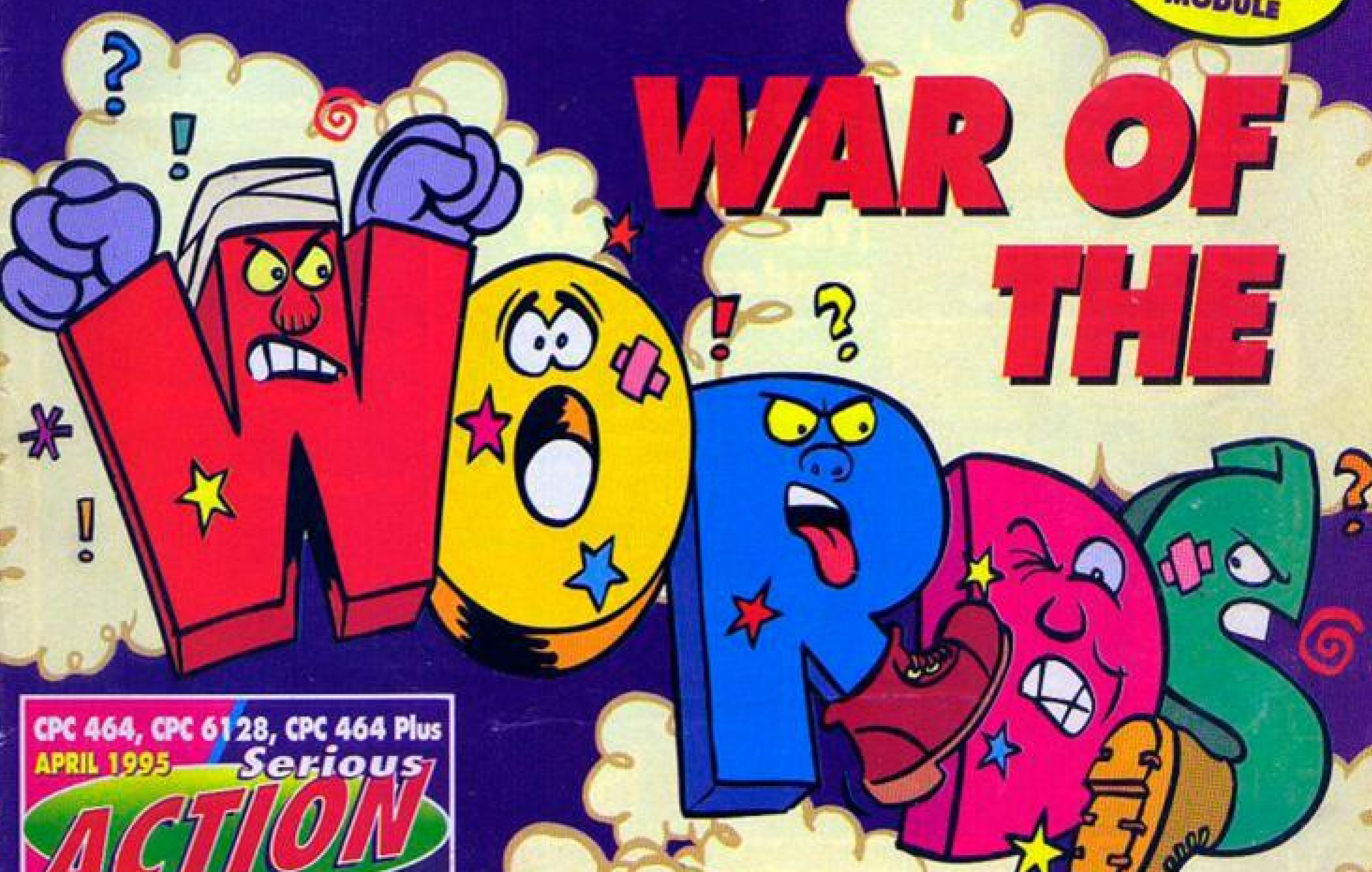
ACCEPT NO IMITATIONS – IF YOU OWN A CPC THE ONLY MAG YOU NEED IS...

AMSTRAD ACTION

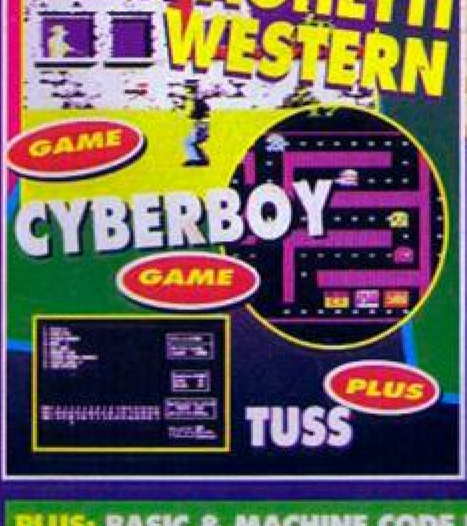
ISSUE No. 115
APRIL '95 £2.99

WIN! BRUNWORD ELITE MKII ROM MODULE

WAR OF THE WORDS



Protext, Tasword and BrunWord – the fight is on!

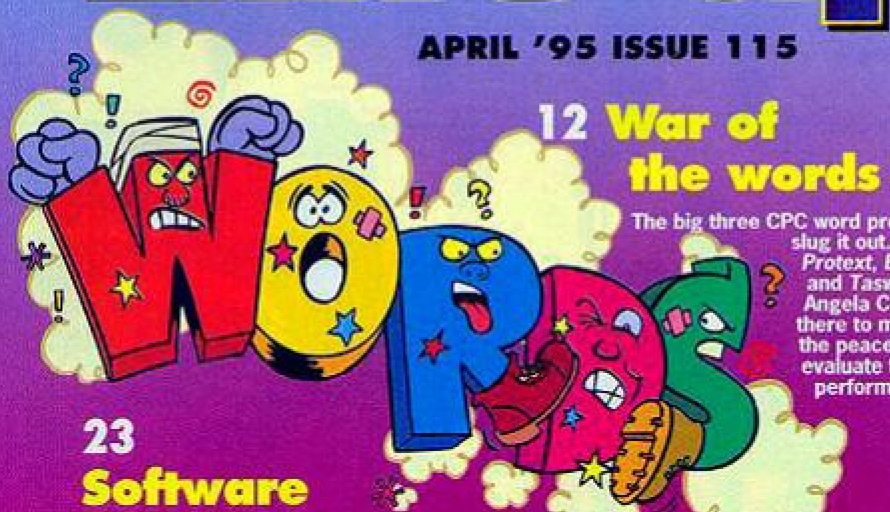


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AMSTRAD ACTION
Line-up
APRIL '95 ISSUE 115



12 War of the words

The big three CPC word processors slug it out. That's *Protext*, *BrunWord* and *Tasword*. Angela Cook was there to maintain the peace and evaluate the performances.

23 Software at a snip!

Canny CPC users know where to get the hard- and software they want and for a good price, too. David Crookes cuts out the confusion and frustration and leads you to the sources of the best CPC bargains.



17 Who are you? (The 1995 AA reader survey)

More reviews? Fewer Techy Tips? Less machine code? We ask the questions. You give us the answers, honestly, accurately and in your own time. We learn more about you. So you get a customised magazine and ,as if that's not reward enough – you could win a Jiffy Bag of software, too! Now, is that fair or wot?

FREE



20 COMPETITION!

Let your CPC bear the brunt of your word processing burden with the *BrunWord package*. *BrunWord* is a byword for quality word processing and you could win the *Elite Mark II ROM Module* – if you enter our quick competition! Turn to page 20 now!

WIN



On your covertape...

Spaghetti Western

Get a Clint in your eye when you turn sharp shooter in an all-time classic. Never mind pumping iron, it's bullets you need to shift!



Cyberboy

An a-maze-ing race wasting ghosties and popping pills in 'probably the most difficult *Pacman* game you've ever played.' Can you handle it?



Aah-n't they cute? Don't be fooled.

The Ultimate Sprite Searcher

Graphically challenged? Show what you mean by adding pictures to your plots. Designed for disc users but tape types can use it, too. Whether you have 128K, 64K or the multiface 128K or 6K versions, no matter! Make your programs action-packed and image-infested with TUSS!



Turn to page 5 now!

Regulars

Serious stuff

Leisure zone

AA116 on sale: Thursday, 20 April 1995

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What's happening...

Hard core? Hard stance

WATCHDOG-8

Worried about the proliferation of pornography among PD libraries or commercial software outlets? Then ask if your library is a member of Watchdog-8 or PSD (Professional Standards for Distribution).

Watchdog-8 is a new voluntary scheme for the software industry. It is run by the people at Prism PD but is 'unbiased' and independent of that company says a spokesman. It is based on the PSD, the largest official watchdog for the all format computer industry. The PSD works alongside Trading Standards and with the computer crime divisions of county constabularies and with New Scotland Yard.

The PSD aims to remove the spread of pornographic software in two ways: to make sure that mail order companies clearly label material that isn't suitable for children so there are 'no unpleasant surprises in the post' said a spokesman; and to pass to the police, details of companies suspected of dealing in child pornography, for example.

To join Watchdog-8 software companies complete an application form. If all is in order, the company making the application receives a logo to use on its stationery.

PSD John Dudley ☎ 01621 778778.
Watchdog-8, 13 Rodney Close, Rugby CV22 7HJ.

Coming to a PC near you

World Wide Web is the liveliest, trendiest place to be on the Internet (that source of information and opinions that disbelievers treat with the scepticism some doctors reserve for complaints of PMT or ME.)

While you can't access it with your CPC the floods of e-mail received since we published the *AA* Internet address show that many of you use college resources to taxi along the Information Superhighway.

The official *AA* site is at http://www.futurenet.co.uk/computing/amstradaction.html. However, if you start at http://www.futurenet.co.uk/ this is the front page of the Future Publishing WWW site with links into the home pages of all the Future magazines.

You can also find your way to the home page of *AA* reader K.E.W Thacker at http://www.cm.cf.ac.uk/User?K.E.W/Amstrad or that of *AA* fan 'blup'.

(If you are bemused by the above information refer back to 'Get the message', *AA*105.)



AA is on now the Net! See 'Coming to a PC near you', left.

FUTURE MUSIC'S MEMS '95
THE MIDI, ELECTRONIC MUSIC & RECORDING SHOW
21st-23rd April 1995 Olympia 2, London

The sound of music...

Want to make music, sweet, sweet music? Then come along to MEMS billed as: 'the ultimate event to learn what's hip 'n' happening in the world of music and sound technology... and an ace place for computer fans, too.'

At MEMS, you'll find demos and displays from the world's leading kit manufacturers and also from the distributors.

The dates are Friday, 21 to Sunday, 23 April and the place, Olympia in London. Tickets cost £5 in advance or £8 on the door, but *Amstrad Action* have secured five to give away to readers!.

All you have to do is tell us which tube line Olympia is on.

But hurry – to get the winners' tickets to them on time we need to receive your answers by Monday, 10 April.

Ticket hotline: ☎ 01369 707888.

Compo winners

I want a game winner(s) are: Dave at Demon PD; Jordan Low, Angus; I Russell, Inverness; Stephen Rich, Harpenden; James Pinnias, Spitsby. (*Sorry James, had a few problems with your writing!- Ed*)
Richard Fairhurst wrote *Fluff* and he also writes for *Amstrad Action*.

The *Image Conscious* winner is E Johnson,Tamworth. The answer is BARRY.

The *Alternative Competition* winners are: (15 titles) P Adams, Bristol; (5 titles) J Slater, Peterborough; (5 titles) Alasdair Stewart, Ardler by Blairgowrie; (5 titles) Gary Andrews, Larne.

WACCI for free

CampurSoft is offering a free copy of *WACCI* to new customers buying software. No minimum purchase is necessary.

DES you or DESn't you?

CampurSoft is offering two free DES programs to DES ROM owners. Send a disc, SAE/Jiffy Bag and state whether you want the screen grabber *Camera* or the tracking sector editor *Disc Editor*. (The latter is very powerful and isn't suitable for beginners.)

No waiting

The eight socket (you can upgrade to a 15 socket version, later) ROMbox from CampurSoft enables instant access to your program/programs so not only does it save you time but it reduces wear on your hard drive, too.

A ROMbox is a program encoder on a chip so you only need to access your disc when saving or loading a particular datafile.

Note that to work with a ROMbox all CPC Plus machines require a peripheral adaptor (not available from CampurSoft). Price £35 plus £2 p&p.

CampurSoft 10 Mcintosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW ☎ 0141 554 4735 Fax ☎ 0141 227 4486

3-inch discs for sale

Original Maxell and Amsoft 3-inch discs for sale, £25 (incl p&p) for ten discs. CampurSoft has received a new consignment. Numbers are, however, limited to ten discs per person. From CampurSoft.
(For contact information see above.)

Amstrad Action
Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW
☎ 01225 442244
Fax 01225 446019
E-mail aa@futurenet.co.uk

NOTE: Please do not ring the office for advice. We can only answer your questions through the pages of the magazine. Please send written enquiries to one of the addresses above.

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Reaction

Write to us at: Reaction, *Amstrad Action*, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW or you can e-mail us at aa@futurenet.co.uk putting 'reaction' in the subject line.

Web feat

I wrote to you suggesting you create your own *AA* home page. Now you have and I've had a look at it (*see 'Coming to a PC near you', page 3 – Ed*). I think it is very good, quite amazing, in fact. Especially all the pictures. So how about covering the following topics...

- **ftp-sites with amstrad cpc-software,**
- **information on how to link a cpc to a pc**
- **information on the newest and best cpc-emulators and their use?**

blup@ezinfo.vmsmail.ethz.ch

Slowly, slowly please. I was rubbish at foreign languages at school and this looks nothing like English to me. All those letters without vowels, the ampersand... Seriously though, blup (that's gotta be foreign or you'd be Herbert or Rodney), thank you. Though I'm afraid it's Rob, the Art Editor who takes credit for the pictures and the Futurenet On-line Editor who put it on to the Web site.

If you look at the Amscene/Directory on page 7 you'll see we have added a new section with information about ftp-sites for cpc-related issues. If anyone knows of any more, please write in. ***AA***

Perhaps blup can help with the next one – the ch at the end of his e-mail address tells me he's in Switzerland which is 'abroad' so...

German-ating ideas?

I go to Germany every summer for my holidays and it would be nice to buy some German games. If you do get games abroad do they still use the name Amstrad?

Alasdair Stewart, Dundee

It's okay, we're covered

Why not lose more *AA*-produced pages and replace them with sample fanzines photocopied on to A5 paper and included as a supplement? This would result in a decent-sized magazine, provide free advertising for fanzines and user groups and reduce *AA*'s production costs. I prefer the covertape in its current form – a complete game plus demos/utilities more than justifies the £2.95 cover price.

Mark Payne, Redditch

Mark, thanks for your concern about our production costs! We are happy to publish details of fanzines and user groups – in fact, any useful CPC info – in our Directory on page 7 which readers can help keep up-to-date by notifying us of changes or omissions.

And, Mark, you asked where to find to buy or swap games. Our reader ads slot is the place. This month it's on page 15. You could probably trade your mother, not just your *Music Maker* package! Though if you go to MEMS (see page 3) you might be inspired to keep the MM package. Can't vouch for your mother, though! ***AA***

Going up

I buy your rad mag when I get the money. I've got a 6128 and a GX4000. And I've tons of questions to ask you...

1 *AA* is IR£4 here in Ireland. Will this price be going down?

2 Is Trading Post the best place to get carts from? They only have 10.

3 Do no software houses make games any more? You didn't review any in *AA*112.

4 I missed a few good issues. Have you had the hardware project so the GX4000 can be plugged up to a cassette recorder?

1 You may have the best beer and very sexy accents but you also have 21% VAT on magazines (zero-rated in the UK). Anyway, Peter you've been bending the truth. I am reliably informed that *AA* costs IR£3.92 not IR£4. Shame on you! And as for going down. Sorry. From this issue *AA* costs more (wherever you buy it) – 4p in the UK, so around 7p in Eire.
2 Carts are hard to get hold of. Try Wizard and Computer Cavern (see Amscene Directory, page 7).
3 It's down to independent stuff, I'm afraid.
4 AGGGGGGHG! ***AA***

Serious ACTION



Tether your horse and hold on to your Stetsons as sharp shooting Richard Fairhurst explains this month's *AA* tape.

SPAGHETTI WESTERN

Zeppelin Software

'Do you feel lucky, punk?'



Are those distress flares he's wearing?

This month, it's your chance to be Clint Eastwood in *Spaghetti Western*, a game recently voted one of the all-time classics by readers of our sister mag *Commodore Format*. So plug in your joystick, limber up that trigger finger and get ready to pump bullets through the outlaws – which, unsurprisingly, is the general aim of this game.

It's not quite that easy, of course. Objects of all sorts are thrown at you, which sap your energy on contact. And even on level 1, the outlaws have a knack of taking pot shots at you and ducking behind windows only to be replaced by an innocent civilians whom you're not meant to shoot: partly because you'll be penalised for it, and partly because you'll waste valuable ammo. *(Altruistic or wot? – Ed)*



Cowboy blues and yellows.

Your stock of bullets is displayed at the bottom of the screen, as a bar representing your current energy level and a count of just how much cash your 'fistful of dollars' contains.

You gain the dosh by shooting outlaws and, oddly enough, picking up the bags with a dollar sign on them. While, to pick up an object, press Fire! and move the joystick down – there are bombs and new magazines (no, not like *AA*) full of ammo to pick up, too.

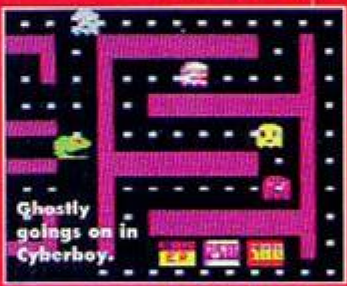
Moving the joystick left moves your player left. Moving it right... You get the general idea.

To jump (handy to avoid balls thrown at you), move the joystick up and in the opposite direction to the way you're walking. So if you're going right, move the joystick up and left.

CYBERBOY

Sheepsoft/STS Software

Pacman: old hat, right? Move around the maze, avoid the ghosts, eat the pills, collect the bonus points. No problem. Today's CPC generation demands something more. *Cyberboy's* programmer, Paul Fairman, came up with the following twist from the depths of his rather warped mind.



Ghostly goings on in Cyberboy.

In this game you can get out your laser and, well, waste the ghosts. Despite this, it's still probably the most difficult *Pacman* game you've ever played. Control is by joystick or redefinable keys.

THE ULTIMATE SPRITE SEARCHER

Sentinel Software

Programmers are programmers, and graphic artists are graphic artists, and never the twain shall meet. Which is a bit of a problem when you've finished your latest eight-level scrolling shoot-'em-up and the spaceship is still a capital 'A' and still firing full stops at the aliens.

Using *TUSS*, as it's more commonly known, you can get around this by, er... pinching graphics from other people's programs. There are four versions accessible from the *TUSS* loading menu: 128K, 64K, and the special 128K and 64K for Mutliface users.



Got sussed with TUSS.

So firstly load the program from which you want to pinch some graphics into memory which is option 2 on the program menu in the normal versions. However, if you have a Multiface you can select one of the special Multiface versions and then load a game in the normal manner. Pressing the red button at any point then kicks *TUSS* into action.

Next, you need to search through memory for some graphics. To do this select the screen mode in which the game plays and then select option 3. Cursor up and down to move through memory. When you come across something that looks like jumbled-up graphics rather than a complete mishmash of game data and code, use cursor left and right to get the right width.

Use the SHIFT and cursor keys for final adjustment, and then exit to save the sprite using option 9. There are tons of other options for you to play about with and even an RSX sprite driver so you can use the graphics easily in your own programs (to reprint the *TUSS* manual would take up the whole magazine).

It's designed for disc users, but tape folks can use it. Load a Multiface version from the *TUSS* menu (press a key immediately that you see 'Press PLAY then any key'), or load an unprotected game file first, followed by a special version of the program such as MEMORY &17FF: LOAD "game filename",&1800. Insert side B of the covertape, wind it to near the end, and type: LOAD "TUSS8800.64K",&8800: CALL &8800.

Loading instructions

Insert side A of the tape, type ITAPE if you're a disc drive owner, and then press CTRL and ENTER. The tape menu loads. Using cursor keys and ENTER to select you can transfer the contents to disc and load any program.

If you want to transfer the files to disc, you need a blank disc formatted to data format.

Loading troubles?

If your tape comes up with 'Read error a' or 'Read error b', our duplicators, Ablex, are the people to contact.

Write to them at Ablex Audio Video Ltd, Harcourt, Halesfield 14, Telford, Shrops TF7 4QR, enclosing your tape, your name and address, a description of the problem, and what CPC you use.

If the covertape loads okay but you're still having problems getting it to actually do what it's meant to, don't shout at Ablex, instead write to Covertape Clinic, Techy Forum, Amstrad Action, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW or e-mail us on aa@futurenet.co.uk putting 'covertape' in the subject line.

DISK 115 TOKEN

Public IMAGE

Keith Woods turns brickie, moonlights as a drug dealer and offers a suggestion to the guilty among you – if you are expecting the cops to call, encrypt your data!

SERIOUS

Rambase v4.6
By John Farlie and Barrie Snell (128K only)

According to the most recent *AA* information, today's most typical *Amstrad Action* reader is male, between 30 and 40 years old, and runs a business on his CPC. At the back of his wardrobe is his old 70's tux which he still thinks looks good on him and which he'd wear if only his wife would let him.*

If you're one of the multitude that fit this description (well, maybe apart from the tux bit), then one of the programs you're most likely to find useful is a good database. Unfortunately, commercial databases (like everything else) are hard to come by, but it probably won't surprise you to know that



Rambase v4.6: full of features, free of bugs.

there's a program in the PD which is almost as good as any that will set you back, say, £20.

Rambase was first released many moons ago as a fairly ordinary database. However, over the years various users have been adding features to overcome problems they've encountered, to make *Rambase* one of the most fully-featured and bug-free programs available in the public domain today.

As well as all the usual data handling features which you'd expect to find in any reasonable database, *Rambase* includes very powerful sorting, searching and field management options.

Most powerful is the sorting option, which allows you to sort any part of the file you want on any field, without needing to sort the whole file.

Almost every imaginable field management option is included, giving you the ability to add, delete, change or even combine fields with the minimum of fuss. Added to this, you can choose where to insert new records in a field, merge files or tabulate the file to produce a compact table with a variable column width.

To take one example of *Rambase*'s frightening versatility, there's an option that allows it to double as a label printer. Within this you find another large range of options which offer you a choice of output sizes, lines and typefaces. Clearly, if you can think of a useful feature for a database, chances are somebody's already included it.

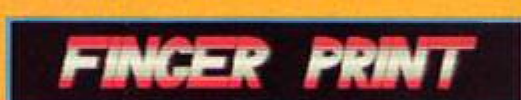
The wonder is that with the addition of all these extra features, *Rambase* has still managed to maintain its ease of use. Everything seems to have been added with practicality alone in mind. Hence the program doesn't look very exciting, but though it lacks any frills, it's got all the thrills imaginable (if entering and sorting data can be thrilling).

The only big problem with *Rambase* is that because it's written in BASIC, it's very slow, especially when you use the sorting option. However, if you've got the patience to put up with this, you'll do well to find a better database than *Rambase v4.6*.

85%

Finger Print
By The Twins

The great thing about the PD, I always say, is that it caters for all sorts of minority interests through programs that wouldn't be commercially viable.



Finger print: a data encryption program.

Finger Print caters for one such section of our community – criminals.

Finger Print is like any other decent address manager, except for one slight difference: it saves your data in code so, as it proudly proclaims on the title screen, if the cops call they won't be able to access your underworld address book... To decrypt your data, you enter a special code!

The encryption service won't be much use to most people (we hope!), but the actual address book itself is about as good as any.

70%

Where to go

Get Rambase v4.6 from King Arthur's Domain, Brympton Cottage, Brunswick Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 3NQ ☎/fax 01903 206739

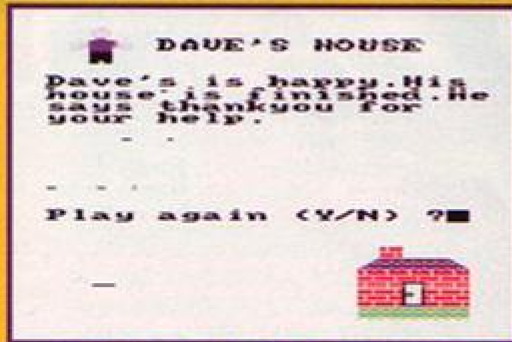
EDUCATIONAL

Dave's House
By Tom Neill (Dwarfsoft)

Dave's a builder, but God only knows how he got the job, because he can't even remember how many bricks he needs to build a house. Thankfully, however, you can help him out by solving a few simple sums.

Basically all Dave's house involves is getting your child to solve a few simple addition problems. As they get them right, they watch Dave's house reach for the skies, but if they get one wrong Dave can't finish the job and loses his cheery grin.

...And, erm, that's it. No, there are no different skill levels, no, you can't do anything other than addition and no, there are no other challenges for



The house that Dave built – with your help.

your offspring to meet. All this little game does is to pick two numbers between one and 30 and ask the child what their sum is. Even this is of little use, as the game is only really testing them, rather than teaching them. The kids either get the sum right or wrong – there's no 'try again' option.

What Dave's House sets out to do it does beautifully. Trouble is, it does so little it's hardly worth bothering with.

20%

GAMES

Drug Baron and Doom
By Tom Dean (Impact)

Tom Dean's long standing disczine Impact has never been the most popular of CPC magazines, probably because some of the prose it contains won't suit most tastes. It does have one notable distinction, however, which is that the Editor, Tom Dean writes much of the free software which is included himself.

Drug Baron and Doom are two of the more interesting games Tom has produced recently...

Doom

The CPC has traditionally been supported by many good quality PD adventures from the likes of Simon Avery or Rob Buckley, but unfortunately this is no longer the case.

Doom will do little to cheer up poverty-stricken PD adventure fans, as it's everything an adventure

The future of this program looks bleak.



game shouldn't be: the parser hardly seems to exist, the storyline fails to excite, it's written in BASIC (so it moves slowly), and the room descriptions are approaching Gertrude Stein-like minimalism. Plus, Tom's, erm, unique sense of humour makes the odd appearance, with the game taking to calling you a creep! Well, if that's your attitude, I'll play something else...



Flat, no sparkle, just like the coke.

Drug Baron

If you have aspirations to become a criminal and do devilish things like using *Finger Print*, you might like to practise your dirty dealings with this management simulator.

The idea is you start off with a load of money which you use to buy either cannabis, heroine or cocaine. You then sell your weed to your local students through your dealers with the long blonde hair, and hope you make a profit.

Unfortunately, it's all a bit too easy. All you need to do is buy the right amount of each drug and use the right number of dealers and then watch the money flow in. It's hardly that easy in the real world (*is that the voice of experience? – Ed*).

This game might be more fun if you had vendettas with other barons, or were on the run from the cops. As it is though, it'll hardly keep you amused for more than ten minutes.

And, oh yeah, and remember, that winners don't use drugs. Just say no!

Doom 30%

Drug Baron 40%

Who are you?

If you think this is slander, turn to pages 18 and 19. We're doing another survey to find out who reads *AA* and what (is it possible to improve on brilliance?) we can do to fill it with what you want to read about. You could win a lot of software... but you have to take part in the competition, first, of course!

NEXT MONTH:

In the last few months it seems that all of the PD's most prominent games programmers have moved on to other ventures. One man that's not going anywhere else, though, is Britain's David Hall, who, with a bit of luck, will, next month, herald the return of the famed (ahem!) Public Image mini-interview with news of his latest production.

Look out also for reviews of the most recent monitor programs for techy freaks and the latest production from the creators of *Ghoul's Writer*. In short: don't miss it!

Amscene *directory*



Clubs

United Amstrad User Group (UAUG), 26 Uplands Crescent, Fareham, Hants PO16 7SY
☎ 01329 234291

Comms

Genesis, the 8bit generation
comp.sys.amstrad.8bit
(newsgroup)

e-mail: roussin@genesis8.frmug.fr.net
(BBS with CPC software established October 1994. 24 Mb of programs including CPCEMU and CPE emulators (on PC and Amiga).
☎ 0033 1 39 50 54 11.

Aspects (on-line address) 0161 792 0260

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(on-line address) 0181 390 1255/1244

CompuServe ☎ 0800 289378

Delphi Internet ☎ 0171 757 7150

Direct Connection ☎ 0181 317 0100

Fanzines

After Dark £1.50
› 41 Westmorland Ave, Newbiggin by-the-Sea, Northumberland NE64 6RN

Amszine
› Gayton, Laneside Road, New Mills, Nr Stockport SK12 4LU ☎ 01663 744863

CPC Mania, £1.50
DMP Software
› 89 Wolverhampton Road, Codsall, Wolverhampton WV8 1PL

The Eliminator
› 14 Station Road, Riccall, York, North Yorks YO4 6QJ
Cheques payable to J R Naylor. Or send 50p.

PD Power
› 13 Rodney Close, Bilton, Rugby CV22 7HL

PD Libraries

Basic PD
› 3 Beacon Lane, Whipton, Exeter, Devon, EX4 8BD
Cassette-only library. Dealing only in BASIC.

Colrob PD
› 9 Aviemore Road, Hemlington, Middlesbrough
Tape-only PD library.

Demon
› 42 Overton Close, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 9NA. E-mail: dave@kechb.demon.co.uk
3.5-inch discs available.

GD PD Software
› 4 Connaught Avenue, Mutley, Plymouth PL4 7BX
25p per disc. Free selection form the listings for four or more selections ordered.

Image PD
› Darren Dodds, 15 Elmwood Drive, Ponteland, Newcastle NE20 9QQ
Also provides a digitising service.

Jamo PD
☎ 01676 533467
A two-side selection costs the same as one-side.

King Arthur's Domain, Brympton Cottage, Brunswick Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 3NQ ☎/fax 01903 206739

PD Fun
› Duncan Tissard, Folly Farm, Cold Ashton, Chippenham, Wilts SN14 8JR
A policy of 'no serious software'.

Prism PD
› 13 Rodney Close, Bilton, Rugby CV22 7HJ

Robot PD
› 2 Trent Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6HF

RSPD
› Robert Sparrow, 40 Dee Court, Hobbayne Road, Hanwell, London W7 3RQ

Sheepsoft
› 298 Holton Road, Barry, South Wales, CF63 4HW ☎ 01446 700730

Hardware

Datel ☎ 01782 744707

Microform (Fax no.) 01772 703131

Romantic Robot ☎ 0181 200 8870

STS
› 298 Holton Road, Barry, South Wales CF6 6HW ☎ 01446 700730

Indie Software Companies

CampurSoft
› 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW ☎ 0141 554 4735

CPC Southwest
› 4 Connaught Avenue, Mutley, Plymouth PL4 7BX

Crystal X Software
› 11 Vicarage View, Redditch, Worcs B97 4RF
Stellar Outpost, £2.99 (tape), £3.99 (disc). Cheques payable to A Swinbourne.

DMP Software
› 89 Wolverhampton Road, Codsall, Wolverhampton WV8 1PL
Send SAE for catalogue.

Pacific Software
› 37 Trimingham Drive, Bury, Lancs BL8 1JW
Technically-minded fanzine.

Radical Software, Brympton Cottage, Brunswick Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 3NQ
☎/fax 01903 206739

SD Microsystems
☎ 01953 483750

Sentinel Software
41 Enmore Gardens, East Sheen, London SW14 8RF e.mail: cs94rrw@Brunel.ac.uk
STS titles and a few original products.

Siren Software
☎ 0161 7965279

Mail Order

Trading Post ☎ 01952 462135

Trojan ☎ 01554 777993

Wizard Games ☎/fax 01723 376586,
☎ 01723 503299

Services

Merlin-Serve, Brympton Cottage, Brunswick Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 3NQ
☎/fax 01903 206739
Games for sale from 50p. Swaps. Will buy unwanted CPC stuff.

Software suppliers

OJ Software ☎ 01257 421915

Computer Cavern ☎ 01628 891101

STS
› 298 Holton Road, Barry, South Wales CF6 6HW ☎ 01446 700730

Tronics North
☎ 010 6177 253 766
› PO Box 7419, Garbutt, Queensland, Australia, 4814
Large supplier of software and CPC bits.

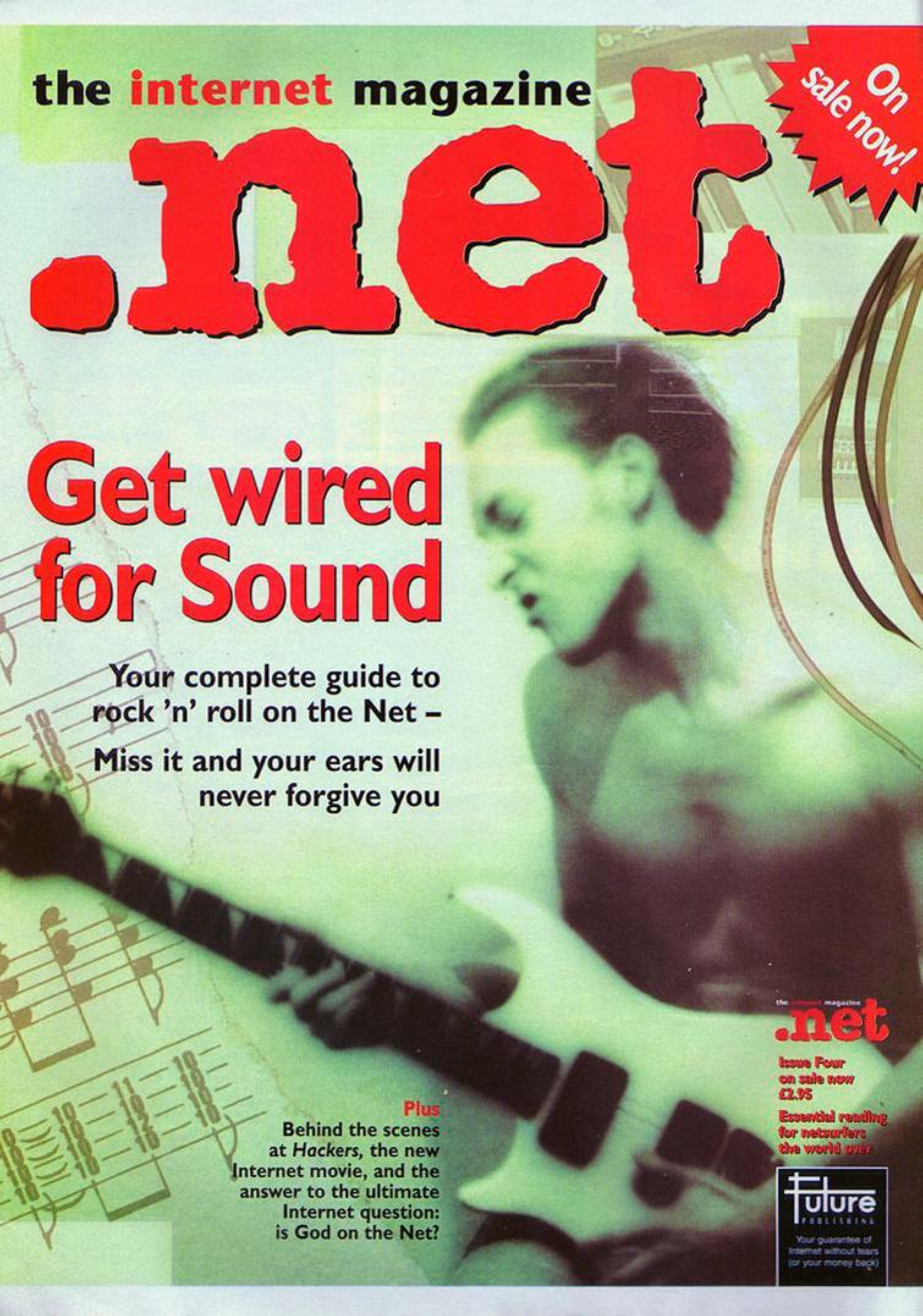
Upgrades/Repairs

HEC
› 47-49 Railway Road, Leigh, Lancs WN7 4AA
☎ 01942 261866

User Groups

UAUG (United Amstrad User Group)
☎ 01329 234291

WACCI ☎ 01244 534942



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Further reading

David Crookes thumbs the pages of another fanzine and thumbs his nose at its prose, presentation and and purpose, and advises on clip art.

A rough guide to pictures

Some fanzines decide to have wall to wall text as opposed to brightening things up with a few pictures. However, if you do want drawings then this is where clip art is an absolute god and the reason why some fanzine editors worship this sort of pics.

The balance between clip art and text has to be struck to avoid an excess of one thing over another. Like a lot of other 'zines, *Eliminator*, (reviewed on this page) has too much clip art and this has an undesirable effect because it smacks of laziness. Anybody can produce a fanzine like the one below left in under an hour and people begrudge paying for something like that.

But how do you go about making your own clip art?

It's easy. All you need is a good art package and a copy of *Powerpage*. Draw your image in MODE 2 using your art package and, once you're happy with the result, save it as a screen file. Load this screen into *Powerpage* and, using SHIFT and COPY, draw a box around the area of the screen you want to be clip art. Don't press SHIFT and COPY twice, though, as this will permanently keep the box on screen.

Once you have a box around the image, you need to call up the Block menu and choose the clip art option. The program asks you for the name of your clip art and then saves it as a .CUT file.

Hey presto! A piece of clip art ready to use.



News

The fanzine *Another World* ("the ultimate disczine for serious users") has closed its doors because, according to its editor, Richard Avery, it took too much of his time and not many people bought it anyway.

We never actually saw a copy but, by all accounts, it was good, which makes it all the worse that sales were low. However, Richard reassures us that he hasn't left the CPC scene and will continue to write PD programs.

Richard Avery, 35 Marlborough View, Cove, Farnborough, Hants GU14 9YA.

Derek Payne of *CPC Mania* fame has asked us to give his 'zine a plug. It costs £1.50.

Derek Payne CPC Mania, 89 Wolverhampton Road, Codsall, Wolverhampton WV8 1PL



AW, now gone to another place. Sadly.

REVIEW

Eliminator

Price: 50p
EDITOR: J R Naylor
ADDRESS: 14 Station Road, Riccall, York, North Yorks YO4 6QJ

How can you eliminate a fanzine reviewer in fewer than 20 seconds? Without using forceful means?

- You publish a fanzine with only ten, single-sided pages and fill them with nothing but rubbish.
- You proudly claim that your fanzine is "better than the rest" and justify this by saying it is brilliant because "our graphic capabilities are good" (which means they use some pretty pictures which should make the mag worth, ooh, hundreds of pounds). Not only this but you emphasise the fact that you have lots of fonts and reckon that this statement means the fanzine is so priceless that it should appear on the Antiques Roadshow in a few years time.
- You include a cheat page and decide not to print any cheats. And, get this: the reason why this page is, well, empty in our review copy (we've been assured there will be cheats in the reader copies) is that the *Eliminator* crew think *AA* will nick them. Right. To make a good impression on a reviewer, you don't insinuate he's a thief, do you?

If *Eliminator* were anything but a fanzine, it would be a self-destructing bomb. A bomb with a time limit of around half a minute and that definitely doesn't mean that the mag is dynamite.

So you turn the page to take a gander at the contents and what do you find? An impressive list of articles and a promise of "ultimate pleasure." Well each to their own, I suppose. Anyway, to the reviews...

There are three scintillatingly, superlative pieces of opinion on *Titus The Fox*, *Street Gang Soccer* and *Cavemania*. All the reviews are short and tell you hardly anything pleasurable or worth reading.

Then you turn to the only other page of any real note, the news section. This just tells you why *Eliminator* closed and subsequently re-opened (makes you wonder why they did the latter, though). That's it, I'm afraid, besides a competition, a survey and something about starting a letters page (which will end up full of complaints, I'm sure).

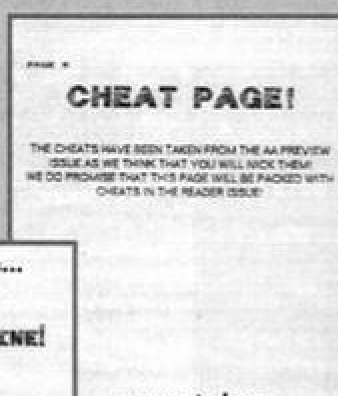
And despite the lavish claims of a good-looking 'zine, the editor has only produced an average offering. Lots of fonts are used but unfortunately this just creates a scrappy effect.

The size of the text is far too big and this forces the amount of words to a page to zoom down rapidly, decreasing the value for money. Still, if you're virtually blind, at least you'll be able to read it.

The clip art is of a very good quality, though. Shame it's used only to waste space.

On the other hand, the 'zine's blank sides come in dead handy for scribbling notes on, but, save your 50p and go halves on a lottery ticket because then at least you've got a chance of gaining a little "ultimate pleasure."

Content: 10%
Appearance: 45%
Overall: 35%



CHEAT PAGE!

THE CHEATS HAVE BEEN TAKEN FROM THE AA PREVIEW ISSUE AS WE THINK THAT YOU WILL NICK THEM! WE DO PROMISE THAT THIS PAGE WILL BE PACKED WITH CHEATS IN THE READER ISSUE!

...proves to be a 'cheatscape', and doesn't deliver.

Eliminator makes claims...



ELIMINATOR FANZINE!
FOR YOUR
AMSTRAD CPC !
THIS MONTH WE TELL YOU HOW WE FOUGHT BACK FROM THE NEVER ENDING PITS OF DOOM!
WE HAVE REVIEWS,
CHEATS,
COMPETITIONS,
THE CHARTS,
TUTORIALS,
AND MUCH,MUCH MORE!
BETTER THAN THE REST!

Basically basic

Are 'files' a) something you send prisoners in a cake? Or, b) a method of storing information? Angela Cook and Rob Buckley answer in a multiple choice format.

There are three types of files on the CPC:

- programs written in BASIC or Machine Code, which are normally called by using the RUN"FILENAME" command;
- binary data, which is just a long list of data in byte format. This is normally used to save: (1) the Guatemalan spotted tree frog, or (2) graphics and game information. An example of this is how to load and save a screen. To save a full screen out type:

SAVE"FILENAME",b,&C000,&3FFF.

To call it back on screen,

LOAD"FILENAME",B,&C000

- another method of storing data – in a more ordered and readable form than a straight block of data, and that is what this article concentrates on.

Over the past few months you have been using:
1 Oxyspot cream. Or;
2 strings and variables, and seeing how these might be used in a database, word processor and even an adventure game. However, once the computer is switched off you have lost all the information.

Thankfully, the CPC being as fantastic as it is, gives you a saving ability. Try typing this – though be sure to have a disc or tape to hand (with both the Record and Play buttons pressed down).

```
10 INPUT"What is your name";Name$
20 OPENOUT"Name.INF":PRINT#9,Name$:CLOSEOUT
```

Run this, and when the ready prompt appears, reset the machine (for a 'soft reset' hold down CONTROL and SHIFT, press ESCAPE), rewind the tape and type:

```
10 OPENIN"Name.INF":input#9,Name$:CLOSEIN
20 PRINT#9,Name$
```

All you have done here, is to save a piece of information. However, you can store whole lists of information all in one file, and then call them back when needed, though you need to call them back in the correct order. For example:

```
10 OPENOUT
"DATA":PRINT#9,NAME$,ADDRESS$,POSTCODE$,RECORD:
CLOSEOUT
20 OPENIN
"DATA":PRINT#9,POSTCODE$,RECORD,NAME$,ADDRESS$:
CLOSEIN
```

When you run it, this program causes an error, since you have tried to:
1 bounce on the keyboard. Or;
2 read back the data in line 20 in the wrong order. In other words, the INPUT#9 in line 20 should be followed by the same data format: string, string, string and number.

The correct line is:

```
20 OPENIN"DATA":INPUT#9,NAME$,ADDRESS$,
POSTCODE$,RECORD
```

You may notice that if you enter a line which has used a comma, (,) whatever came after it has been lost. This is due to the way that BASIC handles inputs, and to get around this, you have to replace both PRINT#9 and INPUT with new commands.

Firstly, replace all PRINT#9 with WRITE#9, INPUT#9 and INPUT with LINE INPUT#9 and LINE INPUT respectively. This is demonstrated in the short listing below.

```
10 OPENOUT"Demo"
20 WRITE#9,"
```

(This is a simple line, with a comma in it!")

```
30 CLOSEOUT
40 OPENIN"Demo"
50 INPUT#9,A$:PRINT A$
60 CLOSEIN
70 OPENIN "Demo"
80 LINE INPUT#9,A$:PRINT A$
90 CLOSEIN
```

Here's a small program that lets you enter a name and telephone number, and continues until you tell it to:
1 stop. Or:
2 do the hoovering.

```
10 OPENOUT"Tele"
20 LINE INPUT"Name";Name$:LINE INPUT"Telephone
Number";Tele$
30 WRITE#9,Name$,Tele$
40 INPUT"Enter another (Y/N)";q$:if q$="y" or
q$="Y" then 20 50 CLOSEOUT
```

Once you have entered all your names, you can use this little program to search through and pick the right number, by entering the name required.

```
10 OPENIN"Tele"
20 LINE INPUT"Please enter
name";N$:N$=UPPER$(N$)
30 IF EOF THEN PRINT"Name & Number
no found":CLOSEIN:END
40 LINE INPUT#9,NAME$,TELE$
50 IF N$=UPPER$(Name$)THEN
PRINT"The number required
is ";Tele$:CLOSEIN:END
60 GOTO 30
```

In line 30 you use a function called EOF, which is short for End Of File.

When this becomes true it means you have read the last piece of information in the file and you close the opened file and end the routine.

Note that trying to read past the end of a file results in an error.

Nine reasons NOT to be a programmer

1 You are contractually bound to wear a Metallica T-Shirt.
2 You must grow your hair really long (*What's wrong with that? – Simon*).
3 Your jeans develop holes within days of you learning Assembly language.
4 All programmers must blush when the opposite sex are mentioned.
5 When you go to parties, everybody avoids you, and you have to sit in the kitchen telling anybody who passes about your latest compression routine.
6 Everything you do becomes revolutionary. For example, 'It's a brand-new way of going to the toilet!' or 'It's a new style of parking I've designed, Officer!'
7 Your face erupts like Mount Vesuvius.
8 Old ladies take pity on you and offer you their seat on the bus.
9 You must make up a meaningless programming pseudonym for yourself..

Type righting

Check the program is correct using TypeChecker. See *AA113*, page 17.

NEXT MONTH:

How to write your own ecologically-incorrect game... How about 'International Seal Culling' or 'Super Badger Baiting'? Now that's worth £3 of anybody's money. All that's left to say, is that the first person to send in the correct answers to the above questions, will win:
1 an all-expenses paid trip to the Caribbean. Or:
2 nothing.

WAR OF THE WORDS



Professional juggler of paragraphs and whizz with words Angela Cook checked the performance of three CPC WP packages.

The challenge was to find a decent word processor that was easy to use for the whole family, which had good production quality, a spell checker, because I can't spell (I resisted the urge to misspell everything in that sentence on purpose), and which was also value for money. So now it is not a battle of the sexes, but a battle of the word processors.

Meet the contestants

The three main contestants are:

- *BrunWord* (reviewed in *AA*114);
- *Protext* (what WACCI are always raving about) and;
- *Tasword* (because it came highly recommended from a friend).

Tasword

In most people's views, *Tasword* has been one of the lesser word processors, being shadowed by giants such as *Protext* and *BrunWord* (*remember to turn to page 20 for your chance to win a copy of the BrunWord Mark II ROM Module – Ed*).

...it is not a battle of the sexes, but a battle of the word processors

A while back, when Tim Norris was Acting Editor, Simon Forrester was still Staff Writer, *AA* had more pages, MJC Supplies was still around, and there was a chance of *Street Fighter II* being released on the CPC (*AA*91), *Tasword 464* was plonked on to the *Amstrad Action* covertape.

Tas-it approval

Very nice of Tasman Software that was, it gave an insight into what *Tasword 6128* would be like. Now that I have it, the first thing that struck me about *Tasword*, was what a delicious screen it had. It was orderly, not confused, and the overall design appealed to me. You can choose your own colours for a start. Also, there is a window (an area of text) at the top of the screen, which gives you some of the explanations of keypresses available. You can scroll through this, or opt to see the whole lot in one go. You can also turn it off, to make room for more text on screen.

Tasword also has a handy little system, whereby, if you have caps lock on, the status bar at the bottom of the screen is also in upper-case, and so on.

Tasword is extremely easy to use and, like both *BrunWord* and *Protext*, comes with a tutor file to teach you the controls and also how to use the package quickly and easily.

One thing I never realised until recently is that *Tasword* puts a hard return at the end of each line.

I am definitely of the view that Tasword is a giant after all

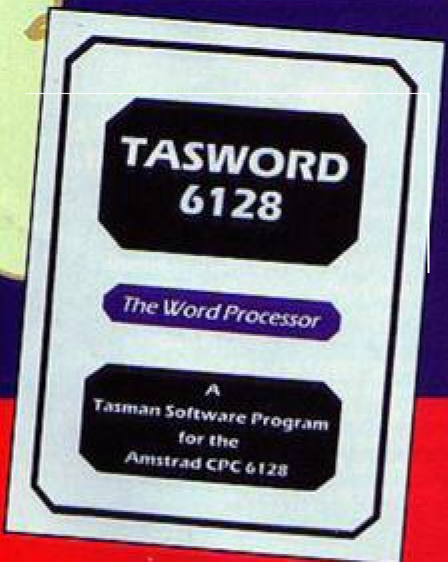
This makes it difficult to transfer to other word processors (*not that you would want to – Tasman Software*) or DTP packages (desk top publishing, such as *Stop Press*, *Micro Design* or Richard Fairhurst's *PowerPage 128*).



Another thing which pleased me on *Tasword*, is the menu option for loading, saving and other things. This is extremely well executed, and simple: one of the many good points of the program. However, you can't fit all that much in memory, so your documents are limited to how much is left in RAM after *Tasword* has taken its cut. *Protext* on disc also suffers, but the ROM version doesn't, nor does

Where to go...

Arnor Ltd (Protext, £29.38, disc only,) Lincoln Road, Peterborough PE1 3HA
☎ 01733 68909/fax 01733 67299
INTERESTING FACT: Arnor produced the AMSTRAD NC-100 and NC-200 software (except the spreadsheet and game).
Brunning Software: (*BrunWord ROM Mark III Module*, *£63*) 138 The Street, Little Clacton, Clacton-on-sea, Essex CO16 9LS
☎ 01255 862308, 9am-5pm
INTERESTING FACT: a PCW version of BrunWord was begun, but never finished.
CampurSoft: *ProPrint* (*Protext* enhancer), £14.99 disc ROM £24.99) 10 McIntosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW
☎ 0141 554 4735/fax 0141 227 4486
INTERESTING FACT: there are a things afoot...
Tasman Software: (*Tasword 6128*, £29.95, *Tas-spell*, £24.95, both disc only), Springfield House, Hyde Terrace, Leeds LS2 9LN
☎ 0113 2438301
INTERESTING FACT: AMSTRAD approached Tasman to produce *Amsword* even before the 464 was released.
NewStar Software Ltd (*NewWord*, £49.95 excl VAT) Kenwood House, Waltham Road, Boreham, Essex CM3 3AX
☎ 01245 465505/fax 01245 465515



BrunWord because it's also only available in ROM.

I always had the impression that Tasword was a cheap piece of software that didn't really justify its existence. Now I am definitely of the view that *Tasword* is a giant after all, and that it is comparable to both *Protext* and *BrunWord*, with almost as many good quality features. The only thing which lets it down, is *Tas-spell*. I mentioned this to Robin Thomson, Director of Tasman Software, and even he groaned: "Ohhh yes."

A bit of a bad spell

This spell checker sucks. It recognises a misspelt word, but won't suggest an alternative. If you CHANGE your word, you then have to go back into the speller to carry on, as you do in *BrunWord*. The 'dictionary' comes on a disc, 464 one side, 6128 the other. Get the wrong side in, and you've had it, you just can't get back to your work: you have to re-do the lot.

By all means invest in *Tasword*, but forget about *Tas-spell*. I feel sure you could get a PD equivalent which suggests words for you.

Word associations

Okay, so obviously *Tasword*, *Protext* and *BrunWord* are not the only word processors available for the CPC. Look out, also, for...

Mini Office II

Mini Office is, technically speaking, an integrated package, and among other things contains a word processor. It's not all bad.

Mini Office II is quite a good all-round package, should you see it second-hand (check out the AA classifieds section on page 15), then it might be worth grabbing it.

MicroScript

MicroScript isn't worth the space it occupies. It's only worth is the rush you get when you pull the plug out. None of the keypresses have anything to do with their function. Perhaps I am being a bit tough on it (it is ten years old after all), but I don't think so. *WordStar* was running on the 64K Cortex machine a few years before, and *Amsword* was around at the same time!

Microword

Microword is a program that acts a bit like *WordStar*, under CP/M V3.0. It uses some of the *WordStar* commands. In fact, I have found that most word processors are based on *WordStar* (Perhaps this is because *WordStar* was one of the first word processors, and was pretty darned good in them days too).

Microword also has a rather crude database, but it shows that somebody did give some thought to its design.

NewWord 2

NewWord 2 is a PCW-based program which is similar to *WordStar* (perhaps not surprisingly, as it was programmed by the same people). *NewWord* is a more polished version though, and has overcome some of the difficulties found on *WordStar*. It is a pretty powerful program, and relatively easy to get used to.

BrunWord

Since I wrote about the *BrunWord Elite ROM Mark III* (*AA*114, page 18), it has been updated. For the full lowdown read that review but here is an update on the new features.

BrunWord is extremely fast and efficient. The self-contained ROM modules are even better because of the extra resident memory, which is equal to having a silicon disc hitched on the back of your keyboard. Obviously *BrunWord* offers all the normal controls you would expect from a good word processor, for example:

- justify;
- columns;
- marking text;
- cut and paste;
- delete word or sentence;
- embedded control codes;

and the list goes on...

Spell check it out

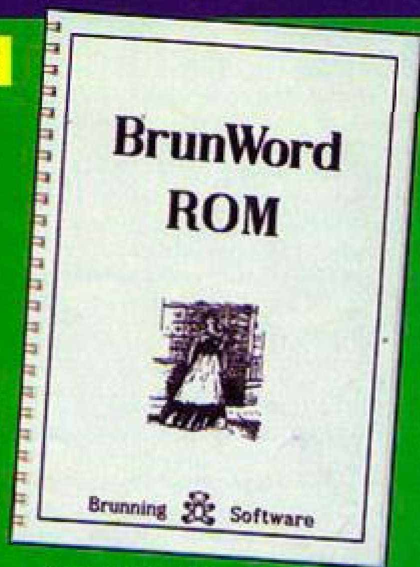
The spell checker is an essential part of any word processor: what is the point of having one if it can't spell, or can't at least tell you when your spelling is wrong?

The good thing about *Info-Script*, is that you don't have to leave the program

BrunSpell, the *BrunWord* spell checker is extremely fast (unlike *Protext's Prospell* – see overleaf). *BrunSpell* has over 33,000 words in memory, and the option to make up a custom dictionary, in which you might save your name and address, or any words which you use, and are not already in the dictionary, such as, "Pneumonoultramicroscopic silicovolcanoconiosis", which is the longest word in the Oxford English Dictionary.



So if you are using those types of words, you want to be able to save them: which you can do in all dictionaries.



One of the things that *BrunSpell* has over *Prospell*, is that you can choose to TRANSFER the correct word, so you don't have to type it yourself.

Info-Script

This is the *BrunSpell* database. Here you can redefine your records to how you want them, for example to include as many fields as you see necessary, and you can also display all of the records at one time, if you want to.

You can also zap your records into the *BrunWord* word processor for your letter or whatever it is you are writing. The good thing about *Info-Script*, is that you don't have to leave the program to do it, so there's no hassle with having to save everything, and so on.

About the size of it

BrunWord has lots of fonts of all different sizes and shapes. An 8 Bit Printer Status Port comes with the package. You plug this and then the printer cable into your printer port hole. This acts as a communicating device for your printer. One of the best features is the Script font, which links characters like 'o' and a 'c' as you would do in normal handwriting. This gives a unique and excellent effect, and one which adds prestige to your work.

Protext

I have been using *Protext* for a number of years, so I am reasonably accustomed to it, but still have never read the manual. It sits at the bottom of my drawer in case someone near me doesn't know what to do.

A wise lady once said to me:
"There are some people who just cannot learn from manuals,"
and she's right. Some manuals are written in the expectation that you have a degree in scientific notation, while others are so ambiguous that you want to forget about the program straight away. Therefore, I am pleased to be able to report, that the manual of *Protext* (and its accompanying software modules) is not in the least bit like either of these examples.



"Some people just cannot learn from manuals"

Instead, the *Protext* manual is thoughtfully written, easy to understand, and has both an index and helpful glossary: something which the *BrunWord* and *Tasword* manuals lack.

Protext has a tidy screen and is available for green or colour monitors, alternatively you can define your own colours.

A la mode

Protext has several modes. For example, press ESCAPE to enter command mode, then type your command. Here's where it gets a little tricky...

If you are a new user of *Protext* (or *BrunWord* and *Tasword*), you won't know all the commands straight away. So, while in command mode, just type HELP, and, lo and behold, a list of commands appears, which let you know what to type to do what you want to do.

The other main modes of *Protext* are document, in which you type your award-winning book, complaint letter or whatever; program mode, in which you can type your own program, then use it in BASIC.

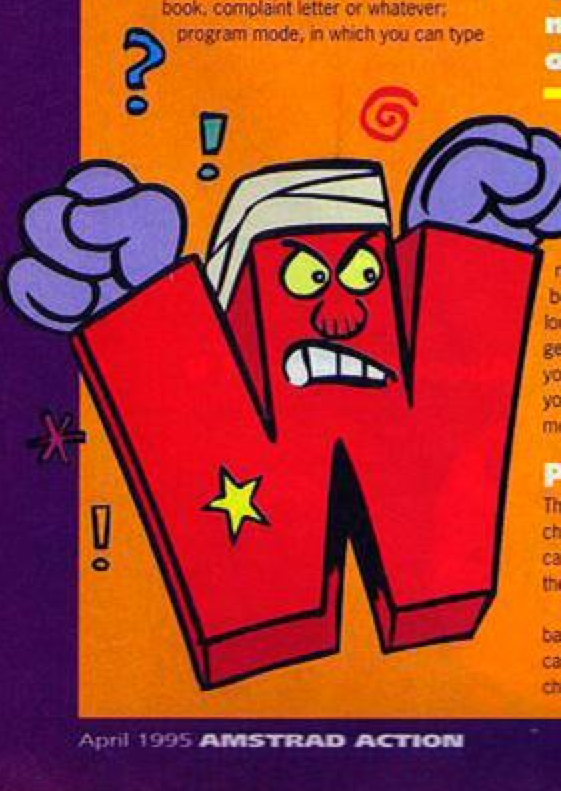
As with all word processors, it is easy to jump from one end of your document to the other. You can also cut and paste using block markers; set your margins; make a page jump: everything is done with in-built control codes which are simple to remember in *Protext*, (as indeed they are in *Tasword* and *BrunWord*).

You can also SET PRINT options. Whether you want continuous printing, Near Letter Quality, page numbers, headers, footers, page length, margins, and so on, defining what you want printed, as you can in *BrunWord* and *Tasword*.

Protext on disc is fine. It is *Protext* after all: the foundations of one of the best CPC word processors available. It does not have all the fancy commands of other versions for other formats, and does not come with a spell checker or mail merge, as the CP/M version does.

While in command mode type HELP and list of commands appears

With the CP/M version of *Protext*, you must make up a working version of it at the beginning, but once you have gone through this long and tedious process, it is done, and you can get on with your *Protext* life. For the extra few quid you have to spend on this one (£4.95 to be exact), you might as well get it, because it offers many more advantages over the first version.



Protext ROM

The *Protext* ROM (read only memory) is a chip, in the same fashion as a game cartridge, and has to be the best of all the Arnor versions.

It sits in a little black box at the back of your keyboard waiting for you to call upon it's services. Mind you, the spell checker and so on costs extra.

What is a word processor?



Simply put: a word processor is a glorified typewriter. With a typewriter, the symbol on the key you press is what comes out on paper. You have to get everything right, or you go through reams of paper. Don't believe what the adverts tell you either, a typed job application with correction fluid all over it will not get you the job. A word processor, basically, allows you to edit (change or correct) any part of the text you want, to store and save your files and retrieve them again.



With a decent word processor you can add fonts (different styles of writing), add enhancements such as bold, italic and underline and change the size of writing and so on.

So, get a word processor and throw away the typewriter.

In the beginning...

I use *Protext*. To write my articles for *AA* I start by bashing out a rough article on the CPC, then use *2In1* (£19.99 from CampurSoft) to transfer it to *Protext* on my PC. I then edit it for a few more days, spell check it several thousand times then ASCII save (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) it to disc, and hurtle it in the general direction of *AA* Towers. (Why don't you do the whole thing on the CPC? – *AA* readers) Because last time I did that it crashed all the computers at Future Publishing! Happy? (Deathly silence from the *AA* readers.)

Pro-active

Protext A PCW User's Guide, £14.95, excl p&p, by Protext expert Rob Ainsley (who once edited, and still contributes to *AA*'s sister mag, *PCW Plus*). ISBN 0-632-02564-6. This book is good for the CPC, too. Computer Bookshop Ltd, 50 James Road, Tyseley, Birmingham B11 2BA ☎ 0121 706 6000.

Get word-wise

This month you could win *BrunWord ROM Mark II* – simply turn to page 20 to find out how. But that's not all, correctly answer a simple question next month and you could win a copy of *Tasword* or *Protext*!

Reader ads

'Bazaar' but true – if you want it, come and get it! The *AA* bargain basement is open for business.

FOR SALE

Many Amstrad tape games for sale. Old classics. SAE to David Barnsby, 10 Churchill Road, Earls Barton, Northants, NN6 OPQ.
CPC 464 colour monitor, 3-inch disc drive. 64K RAM pack. DMP2000 printer. All manuals, joystick, blank tapes, discs, Protext discs, spare ribbon. £200 ono.
☎ 01435 864915 (eves).
Box of 40, CPC 3-inch discs, all with games on them £6C. ☎ 01709 896821 (eves).
Amstrad colour CPC6128 and loads of disc and tape software, ROMs, books and hardware. SAE for list. John McNally, 15 Selwyn Drive, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9NH.
CPC464 keyboard, £30. Memory expansion £20. G.A.C. £10. Cassette games from £2. 464 manual £10. Interested? 31 Oriel House, Blackcat Close, Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham B37 5DG.
CPC EMU runs Amstrad software on an IBM-PC. Requires 386SX33, VGA, HDD. David Cantrell ☎ 01424 221015 (eves, Mon-Thurs).
Magazines: *AA* (56), *ACU* (20), *CWTA* (8), binders. Software: MicroScript, MasterCalc, MicroPen, DEVPAC, Screen Designer. All with manuals. Books: Amstrad Omnibus, disc system, databases. ☎ 01942 211053.
Games galore, far too many to mention. Loads of special offers. SAE to Alasdair Stewart, Appin Cottage, Ardler by Blairgowrie, Perthshire PH12 8SY.
Amstrad CPC/6128 and colour monitor with dot matrix printer. Includes Mini Office II on dsic. Games include Lemmings, Myth, Rodland, Dizzy and more. Also blank discs. Everything £100.
☎ 0191 3722557.
Amstrad 464 Plus and colour monitor, more than 50 games. Excellent condition. Only £100.
☎ 01580 715116.
6128 Plus, 464 CPC Plus, CTM 644 colour monitor. Joysticks, games, £120. No offers. HB Jenkins, 59 Hermitage Road, Dartmouth, Devon TQ6 9TD ☎ 01803 835403
Spectrum games for sale. For list write to c/o 94 Langford Road, Mansfield, Notts NG19 6QE
CPC6128 colour, second drive, modulator, RS232 and control interfaces, mouse, Multiface, 2 joysticks, 50+ games, tapeplayer, DRGraph, DRDraw, DRCBasic, DRPascal, Supercalc2, AA20-99, manuals, books, £175. Bayliss
☎ 01734 782642.
Blank 3-inch discs. 30 for £15. Also Multiface II £15 Jonathan ☎ 01502 518773 (after 3.30pm).
CPC464 with green screen, monitor, manual, joystick, 20 copies of *AA* with covertapes. £80 O.N.O. ☎ 0181 845 2037.
CPC 464, colour monitor and keyboard. 80 plus games, 2 joysticks, 18 plus copies of *AA*. Desk optional. Valued at £350 but will sell for £250. Bargain! Edward Gibbs, Fair acres, Goudhurst Road, Marden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9JY.
☎ 01622 832115.
Games for sale. All on one tape. All less than £1 each. SAE for further details to Dan Brook, 8 Baguley Drive, Unsworth, Bury B19 8HS.
Games and PD on tapes for CPC464. SAE for list to Gart Smethers, 13 Meadow Close, Cononley, W Yorks BD20 8LZ.
CPC6128 with colour monitor, 3.5-inch drive, DMP 2000 printer, cassette player, software (Protext, MasterCalc etc), adventure games, lemmings, Hero Quest ad more. Magazines (*AA* and covertapes, manuals and books. £250
☎ 01925 762139.
Soft 968 £22, Laser basic (tape) £12, Laser compile (disc), £9, Elite Gold (tape) £9, and more. Kevin Heywood 18 Sinclair Ave, Banbury Oxon OX16 7DW.
Amstrad colour CPC128, loads of disc/tape soft/hardware, ROMs, books. SAE: John McNally, 15 Selwyn Drive, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9NH.
I need a ROM Board with Protext and ProSpell.
☎ 01288 321348 Paul (after 6pm).
CPC 464 colour, 6128 chip, DD1 drive, multiface 2, DKTronics add-on memory, manuals, games. £100. Buyer collects or pays postage. Phil Andrews, Steppes Cottage, Kimbolton, Hereford HR6 0HD.
CPC 464 colour multiface II, joysticks, Lightpen, *AA* covertapes, 43 games, Mini Office 2, Assembler, Vientext, Amsoft Software, 6 years' worth of *AA/ACU* magazines, blank tapes, computer desk, original packaging/documentation. £150.
☎ 0142 477560 (Hants).
CPC 6128 colour monitor, TV tuner, joystick, £150 also serious software books and games eg Masterfile, Tasword, Utopia etc. £7 each,
☎ 01621 782147 anytime.
Games all boxed originals. Approx 50 on tape and on disc. £35 together. Also available separately. Peter ☎ 0161 485 1854.
43 *Amstrad Actions*, 23 cover tapes, 29 ACU's and 13 WACCL's. £50 the lot, or make an offer. Gary ☎ 0181 806 8234.
Disc and cassette compilations/single games for CPC464, 80 games. £35 incl p&p. C Rees, 66 Miskin Road, Mid Glamorgan, CF40 2QW.
CPC6128 mono, comprehensive outfit, 3.5-inch drive, FD1, ROMbox, ROMs, 256K Rampack, Multiface, modulator, mouse, RS232 interface, professional software, manuals, extras £120 or separate. Brewer ☎ 01344 4879489.

WANTED

Any PD software (disc-only) for PD library. Will return 1/4 of all contributions. Alex, 30 Gritstone Road, Matlock, Derbys DE4 3ED.
Elite for Amstrad CPC 464 cassette only. Will give you either Ikari Warrior or Batman.
Ben ☎ 01488 682354 (5pm-9pm).
Games on discs. Also tape to disc copiers and adventure games. Will buy or swap. I have lots of games on disc and tape. Bill Buchanan, 65 Carr Barn Brow, Clayton Brook, Preston PR5 8LD ☎ 620381.
Sim City, Super Cauldron, Double Dragon 1. Also selling some games. Help for Prehistoric 2 would be appreciated. Meirion
☎ 01222 709289.
Manual for Amstrad printer DMP 2000. F Paul, 15-6 Murrayborn Grove, Edinburgh EH14 2PG
☎ 0131 538 3966.
Tapes only for 464. Any quantity but must be reasonably priced. S Collinson, 60 North Parade, Sleaford, Lincs.
Wanted on cassette Elite for CPC464, GAC manual. Swap (Heroquest, Space Crusade) or buy. Lee Cleary, 20 Acacia Avenue, Maltby Nr Rotherham, S Yorks S66 8DS.
For music machine, software only wanted for Amstrad 6128. On disc. Please help. Chris Bollas. PO Box 1C010 Athens Greece.
EPYX SuperCycle, on Amstrad CPC 6128 disc. Will pay cash or swap for one of hundreds of games (carts/discs/tapes/spectrum).
James ☎ 01256 880557 (after 4pm).
Sim City for 6128+.
Patrick ☎ 65562. (Northern Ireland.)
The Program patients for Amstrad 6128. Mr/Mrs Butler ☎ 01334 478817.
Amstrad manual for DMP 3250 printer. HJ Smith, 8 Elgin Road, Southampton, Hants SO15 1JP ☎ 01703 639918.

USER GROUPS

Established user group. Non-profit making. Superb range of services. PD, discounts, advice, contacts, second-hand hard/software. SAE to CCC(AA), Box 121, Gerrards Cross, Bucks SL9 9JP ☎ 01753 884473.

SERVICES

Free PD! Send disc/tape PD (not from *AA* covertape) for free PD. Eagle PD, 21 Dane Bank Ave, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 8AE. Original software preferred. Prompt returns.
Free software! 25p stamp and disc/tape to Maybrook Software, 95 Humberstone Road, Luton LU4 9SR for free covertape, log and program list.

OTHER

Urgent! Penpals wanted. Aged 16 and over. M/F. Any computer type. Swap games or chat. Barbara, 5 Cloughview Doagh Road, Ballyclare, Co. Antrim, N Ireland BT39 9EP.

AMSTRAD ACTION FREE READER AD FORM

Want some software? Want to get rid of something? You're in the right place. Fill in the details in the box below – one word to one box – and send it to: Reader Ads, *Amstrad Action*, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath Avon BA1 2BW.

Your name ____________________

Your address ____________________

____

____

____

Post code ____________________

☐ **For sale** ☐ **Wanted** ☐ **User groups** ☐ **Services** ☐ **Other**

Assembly line

Richard Fairhurst is going round and round in loops this month – professional loops, you understand.

I always hated physics at school – particularly those lessons where the teacher just waffled on about theory non-stop for 40 minutes. Anyone who made it through these without dying of boredom would leave the classroom with a burning conviction that Lessons Should Be More Fun.

Let them suffer!

When I left school, and all this ceased to be a problem, such idealism changed into: No! Let 'em suffer like I had to! So you won't be surprised, after this rather roundabout explanation, to learn that this month's 'Assembly line' is (almost) all theory.

Last time, you saw how simple it was to get the firmware to CALL a routine every 50th of a second. This, in fact, is a crucial principle for anyone who writes programs which involve rapidly-updated screen display: arcade games, demos, and even certain utilities.

You probably know that when you see animation on your CPC or television, it's just an illusion: a number of frames are displayed in such quick succession that the brain sees them as continuous movement. As with (non-American) TVs and all other displays on inexpensive computers, the CPC displays 50 of these frames per second. It makes sense, then, to achieve the smoothest and most consistent rate of animation, to synchronise your program's operation with these frames. To generate a new picture every 50th of a second is ideal. If you are moving large sprites around the screen, though, this may be unfeasible, and a 25Hz (generates 25 pictures per second) system is preferable – so you have a new picture every other frame. It's important to have a constant rate of display, otherwise the animation just looks tatty.

You could do all of this by setting up an interrupt, as you did last month. It's much simpler, though, to have the main program running on a loop which executes 50 times per second itself...

Moving pictures

To do this, you need to start executing each pass of the loop when the electron beam which 'draws' the image of each frame on to the monitor is at a fixed point on the screen. Fortunately, the CPC is capable of testing for this, using the firmware call at &BD19. Call this, and processing stops until the electron beam is at 'frame flyback'. This is the stage between drawing two frames, when the beam is flying back from the bottom of the screen (having just finished drawing the previous frame), ready to start again at the top for the next frame.

Using this method, careful coding and use of delay loops ensures you can predict where on the screen the electron beam is at any point in the execution of your main loop. This is a Good Thing...

Say your program is printing a sprite half-way down the screen, and the electron beam is passing this position at the time. You are then changing the graphics on the screen at the same time that the electron beam is trying to display them: the main cause of flicker in arcade games. Being able to print sprites before the electron beam has to display them avoids such unsightly effects.

This month's homework

With this knowledge, your homework for this month is to have a go at converting last month's timer program to run on a 50Hz (50 times per second) loop.

Get rid of the interrupt code in the 'on' and 'off' routines, since you're not using that method now, and replace them with a loop consisting of...

```
.loop
call &BD19
call rout
jr loop
```

This simply waits for frame flyback (which, as you know, only occurs once every 50th of a second), calls the timer routine, and loops. As it is, this will carry on forever, even when the timer has hit zero and the border has turned red. Try adding some code to stop either when a key is pressed, or when the timer has reached zero.

Most commercial game releases, along with 99% of demos, are coded in this way as are those utilities, especially, which require a WIMP system. The main loop in *RoutePlanner**, for example, runs on a similar system to this. It calls the routine to move the pointer according to the user's input, and then does anything else it needs to do at the time, such as draw a line on the map.

It's the custom

A demo would move the scrolling message left by one byte, animate sprites and call the music-playing routine in a loop like this. Music-playing routines are invariably designed to be called this way. However, when you reach the level of fluid animation required in demos and arcade games, you're not going to be using the firmware – custom sprite routines are the order of the day...

Instead of using CALL &BD19, game coders hit the hardware directly to find out when frame flyback is and the firmware's standard interrupt, which carries out tasks such as keyboard scanning and sound generation, is turned off. This means you have to write your own routines to do exactly this – never the most enviable of tasks, especially with CPC technical documentation so hard to come by these days. But wait! Do we see a saviour in the guise of a Next Month: box approaching...?

A plug for the gap!

*Richard Fairhurst is the author of *RoutePlanner*, the route guide, £19.95 from Sentinel Software, 41 Enmore Gardens, East Sheen, London SW14 8RF
e-mail: CS94RRW@brunel.ac.uk

NEXT MONTH:

Using this 'professional' *[yes, we get the message]* frame-based principle, next month you write a very amateurish game. You will be delighted to know (you will, honestly, when you see how complicated it is) that you use the *AA* keyboard routine, which you can copy out and use in all your future endeavours.

AMSTRAD ACTION READER survey

We want to find out exactly what you like and what you'd like to see in AA. Just complete and return the questionnaire. You will help decide what goes into AA and you could win games galore, too...

Things change rapidly in the *AA* scene and so every now and then we need to check up on what you want from your main source of CPC-related information.

This is, indeed, one of those nows, and, as it were, thens.

We need to know all about you (okay, about your CPC habits, at least) so that we can make sure that *AA* is providing you with what you want from a CPC magazine. And, as the magazine is lot smaller than it used to be, it's even more important that every page counts. That's why it's vital that you take part in this survey.

As if that weren't enticement enough, we're encouraging you even further...

Three survey replies will win their senders 10 games each!



Tell us what you want in *AA*.

PART 1
WHO ARE YOU?

1 How old are you?__________

2 Are you male (M) or female (F)? ______

3 In which part of the country (or world) do you live?

South East ☐ South West ☐
Midlands ☐ East Anglia ☐
Wales ☐ North East ☐
North West ☐ Scotland ☐
Northern Ireland ☐

Other (please specify)__________

4 What do you do with your days? Are you...?

At school ☐
At college/university ☐
At work ☐
Unemployed ☐
Retired ☐
Full-time mother/father ☐
At Her Majesty's pleasure ☐

PART 2
MACHINE SPECIFICS

5 What type of Amstrad have you got?
6128 ☐ 664 ☐ 464 ☐
6128 Plus ☐ 464 Plus ☐

6 How long have you had it?__________

7 Was it new or second-hand and where did you get it from? __________

8 Do you use it for anything other than playing games? If yes, please. specify

____

____

____

____

9 How many hours do you spend using your CPC per week on average? ______

10 What other computers or consoles do you own?__________

____

PART 3
SOFTWARE

11 How many games do you own?
Fewer than 10 ☐
10-30 ☐
31-50? ☐
51-100? ☐
More than 100? ☐

12 Do you own software mainly on:
Tape? ☐
Disc? ☐

13 Other than games what software do you use regularly? Please specify particular titles__________

____

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____

____

14 Where do you get your software?

____

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____

____

Tell us about it!

Play your part in the *AA* revolution and you could win some software, too. Simply send your questionnaires (or a photocopy) to: Reader Survey April 1995, *Amstrad Action*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW before Wednesday, 26 April, 1995.



PART 4
HARD FACTS

15 Which computer magazines do you read regularly?

____

____

16 How much money do think you will spend on your CPC (hardware and software) in the next six months (estimated to the nearest £10)? ______________

17 What other hardware do you own:

Disc drive? ☐ Cassette deck? ☐
Scanner? ☐ Multiface? ☐
Printer? ☐ Hard drive? ☐
Other (please specify) ______________

____

____

18 Are you planning to buy any of the above in the near future? If yes, please specify…

____

____

PART 5
COMMS

19 Do you know what 'comms' means? Yes/No

(If not, or to refresh your memory, see 'Get the message' *AA*105.)

If yes, are you interested in the Information Superhighway? ______________

Do you own any of the following:

Modem Yes/No
Comms software Yes/No
Do you use it with your CPC? Yes/No
Do you use a service provider? Yes/No
Which? ______________

____

Or do you link up through…?

Work Yes/No
College Yes/No

What do you use comms for?

____

____

____

____

PART 6
THE MAGAZINE

20 How interested are you in the various sections of the mag? Please give a mark from 0-10.

Covertape ______
Letters ______
Directory ______
Public Domain ______
Fanzines ______
Hardware features ______
Serious software features ______
Cheats and pokes ______
Reader ads ______
Competitions ______
Techy Forum ______
BASIC tutorials ______
Machine code tutorials ______
Interviews with CPC personalities (users/developers) ______

21 What would you like to see on the covertapes? ______________

____

____

____

____

22 What would you like to see features on?

____

____

____

____





PART 7
ADVERTISING

23 Do you ever order software/hardware from the adverts you see in *AA*

Yes ☐
No ☐

24 If the answer to 23 was yes, how would you rate the level of service you have received from the companies involved?

Very good ☐
Good ☐
Okay ☐
Poor ☐
Very poor ☐

Comments: ______________

____

____

____

____

____

25 And finally, your name and address (so we can send you a prize if you win!)

____

____

____

____

____

Post code ______________

So why do you need a digitiser?

How do you get pictures from the TV on to your CPC screen? Richard Wildey is worried about your images.



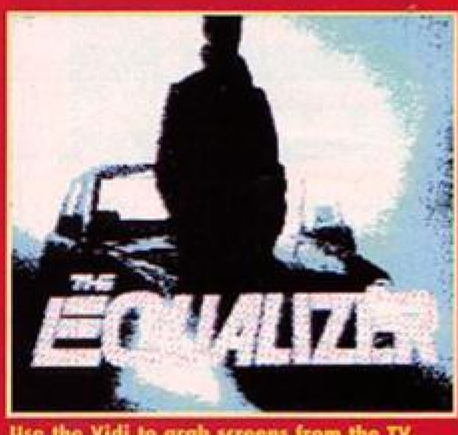
From the main menu you can alter settings.

A digitiser is a piece of hardware that allows you to grab images from the television and display them on your computer screen. The only available piece of equipment on the CPC that lets you to do this is the Rombo Vidi Digitiser.

Pass the source

Originally released in 1986 by Rombo at a cost £69.95 the Vidi was an instant crowd puller at computer shows. Unfortunately Rombo no longer make the digitiser after selling the design to Avatar. Avatar has since gone out of business leaving a source for such equipment dry. So, if you are after a digitiser check the classifieds sections of *AA* or fanzines such as *WACCI**

The Vidi comes with software to complement the hardware which comes packed neatly inside a black box that plugs into the expansion port. A phono lead then goes from the Vidi's video in socket to the video out connection in the video or camcorder. A phono lead is supplied but if it's missing, because you bought the hardware second-hand, for example, try electrical or video shops for replacements.



Use the Vidi to grab screens from the TV.

On a screen near you

Once connected, the software beams images into your CPC at a top speed of six frames/sec. Without going into too much detail, the Vidi works by decoding the signal from any composite video output into binary and then collating this in its own internal 16K RAM. From here the Vidi sends this data into memory location &4000 of your CPC and then displays it on the screen. While the screen is displayed the process is repeated.

Anything you want

The Vidi can digitise anything that gives a composite video output. So you can hook up a video camera, VCR or another computer.

Connecting a computer via a video can lead to interference. For the best results connect a Genlock to give the correct form of output, thus giving you an image of what would appear on the Amiga on the CPC screen, obviously in Amstrad resolution and colours.

The Vidi software comes in two forms:

- the principle one is a menu driven system that allows you to grab full screen images;
- the second is a series of RSX commands that are usable from BASIC in conjunction with your own programs.

Many example programs are supplied with the Vidi Digitiser together with help on the RSX's, to give you a fair idea of how to maximise the potential of this innovative and also fun-to-use software.

New resolutions

Grabbed Images are in all the CPC's resolutions. To obtain the best picture use the four colour MODE 1 or monochrome MODE 2. Grabbing an images in MODE 0 requires a still picture, so unless you have a camcorder and tripod you need to grab the test card. A video on 'pause', unfortunately, won't do.

A MODE 0 screen with 16 colours, alas, doesn't look much like the original image as the colours are not correct. Attempted is a grey scale, but with the CPC's palette it just doesn't work unless you have a green screen monitor where you effectively have 27 shades of green.

What you need is a larger palette. Owners of the CPC Pluses can now take the time to feel smug as the range of colours gives you 16 intensities of each available colour.

This means you can use excellent shading effects to give you some of the best CPC art ever. The design of the supplied Vidi software is for the standard CPC palette so you need to convert the colours manually.



Choose the Vidi program or the RSX's.



Add the Vidi to your programs with RSX's.

Use the facilities

To use the Plus's extra facilities you must access the extra features as explained in 'Getting the most out of your Plus', AA112, page 20, or use the terrific, PD, B-ASIC. If you prefer to stay away from the programming side the art package *Smart Plus* allows you to use the extra colours with ease.

A hunting ye will go

*See Amscene Directory on page 7 and 'It's a snip' on page 23 for contact details and further ideas for tracking down CPC-related hard- and software which isn't readily available.

Go and get it!

Smart Plus, £13 95 from Radical Software, Brympton Cottage, Brunswick Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 3NR ☎ 01903 206739.
B-ASIC, PD, from all good PD libraries.
Check out the Amscene Directory on page 7 to find relevant addresses.

Next month:

See how they run... Why do you need a mouse? Richard Wildey squeaks up.

Every BrunWord's a winner

Last month Angela Cook professed the BrunWord word processing package 'excellent'. Enter our competition and you could decide for yourself – free!

User-friendly – 90%
Production quality – 90%
Spell checking – 97%
Design – 90%
Value – 96%
Overall – 95%



It's all here and it could be all yours, see the 'How to win' box.

These were the scores that Angela Cook awarded the *BrunWord* word processor in AA114. Even Olga Korbut would have been hard pushed to produce a better set!

'Excellent, not only as a home package but also in an all-round business capacity,' were the accompanying words.

The *BrunWord Elite Mark II ROM Module* (without ROMDOS) retails for £63.

The *BrunWord Elite Mark II ROM Module* is:

- a self-contained plug-on unit, so
- you don't need to splash out on any hidden extras that up the cost.

You can:

- use the *BrunWord Mark II* on any of the CPC range of computers, for example the CPC6128, CPC464, 6128 Plus and 464 Plus.

The *BrunWord Elite Mark II ROM Module*:

- checks your spelling as you are typing using the *Info-Script* spell checker!

What else can we say? Beyond telling you how to enter the competition, that is...

How to win the BrunWord Elite Mark II ROM Module

Just answer the question below, write the answer on a postcard or back-of-an-envelope and send it to: Wordy-wise, Amstrad Action, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW or e-mail it to aa@futurenet.co.uk (putting 'April compo' in the subject line). Your entry must reach us before Wednesday, 26 April 1995.

And the question is... Who wrote:

'Twas brillig and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe
All mimsy were the borogoves
And the mome raths outgrabe.'

NOTE: For more information on the *BrunWord Elite Mark II ROM Module* and any other versions of *BrunWord*, see AA114, 'The last word?', page 18 or contact: Brunning Software, 138 The Street, Little Clacton, Clacton-on-sea, Essex CO16 9LS ☎ 01255 862308 (9am-5pm).

TECHY forum

Richard Fairhurst remains unsunk by heat, tries to avert an art attack, and proves he is an expert on PCW-CPC connections.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Exciting topics no. 283

I have been advised to write to you to help me find a good stock management program in the public domain.

What I need is a program that can handle 5000 items, probably in a series of files, with facilities for stock number, stock quantity, stock reorder level, stock reorder quantity, catalogue number references for suppliers, catalogue numbers for sales purposes, cost reference and sales reference and a tabulate facility across the page for any of the fields to be printed in any order.

I was told that if anybody knows of such a program it would be Richard Fairhurst, so, can you help me please?
Roy Everett, Braintree

There's nothing quite so sophisticated as a stock management program available, I'm afraid. Well, there is one (*Stock Control* by Scott Giddins), but it's really rather simplistic for your needs.

I'd recommend using a really good database: *Rambase 3* (see page 6) is your best bet if you have 128K, or *PowerBase 2* if you only have 64K.

This might be a bit awkward in some circumstances, for example, removing one item from stock necessitates a whole 'Edit' action – but it's the best you'll get.

Feel the heat

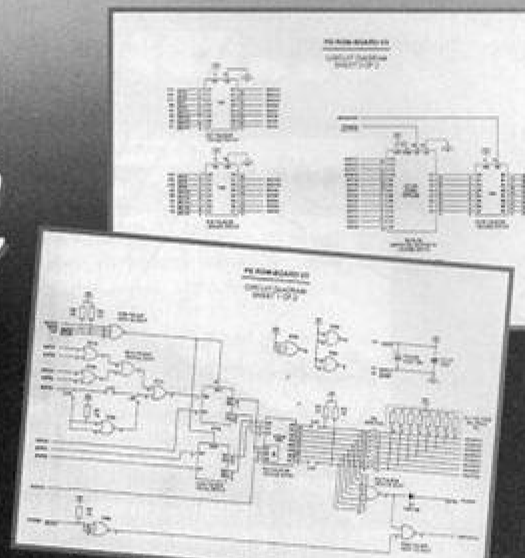
A few weeks ago my 6128 suddenly stopped working, so I went down to the local electronic repairs place (they usually do videos) and they charged me A$40 to get it working again.

They said the Z80 had blown, which sounds pretty major, but fine, I can afford such repairs. Yesterday it did it again, and when I opened the case it sure felt pretty hot. I bought a new one, cheap, from the local electronics superstore, but I don't want to bother with this again, so what can I do to stop it happening once more?
Scott Roberts, New South Wales



You could try going back to your repair shop and asking for some money back because their original shoddy repair didn't last, however, they might not be co-operative. Anyway, get hold of some heat sink paste (such as Unick, see bottom left) from an electronics shop, and find a bit of heat sink (the metal part which removes heat from electronic equipment) – try a disused transformer or Spectrum.

Stick this on to the top of your Z80 with the heat sink paste (being careful not to lick your fingers, it is fairly toxic), make sure that it's not touching the metal of any chip legs, and wait for this to dry. Your CPC should then be back in full working order.

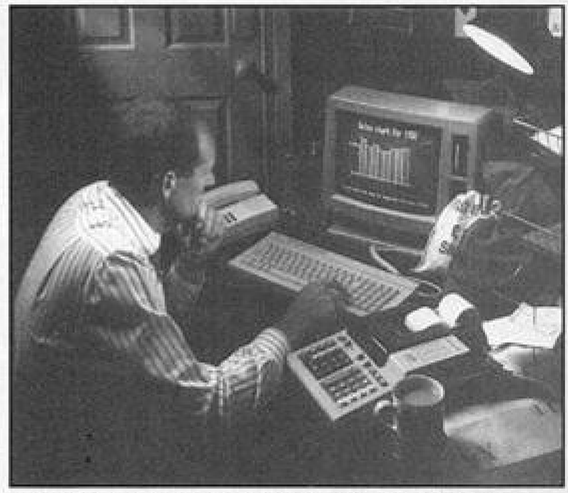


Circuit training – the CampurSoft DIY ROM box.

Only re-connect

My little brother broke the connector on our disc drive. Thinking it was useless we gave away all our discs including CP/M (doh!). Is there a replacement file or disc copier available, preferably PD? I have a formatter. Would a ParaDOS ROM be a suitable

PCW



Rate of transfer: to and from a PCW, left and below.

Part 1

1 Because of the limitations of having a cassette player on my 464 Plus, I was wondering if it would be possible to transfer the disc drive from an Amstrad PCW 8256 and plug it into the 464 Plus. If so, how could it be done?
2 Would it be possible to make the printer from the PCW compatible with the 464 Plus?
3 Would I need to install the disc drive interface which I think you gave instructions for in *AA91*? I don't mind if a little soldering is in order.
Jason Barber, Thetford

1 The mechanism of a PCW 8256 drive is the same as that in an Amstrad FD-1, so, yes, it is possible.

You'll need a 5V power supply as well, though.
2 Sorry, no: PCW printers are dumb creatures which have most of their output controlled directly by the PCW's operating system, whereas a printer hooked up to a CPC needs to have a built-in program to tell it how to draw letters and such like on the page.
3 Yes. Remember that you only have an FD-1 equivalent, too, rather than a fully-fledged DDI-1 with 464 interface.

Part 2

My daughter and son-in-law run a small business from home using a PCW 8256.

I visited them for Christmas, and took a few of my 6128 discs, hoping that there was some way of getting them working for the children – but no joy.

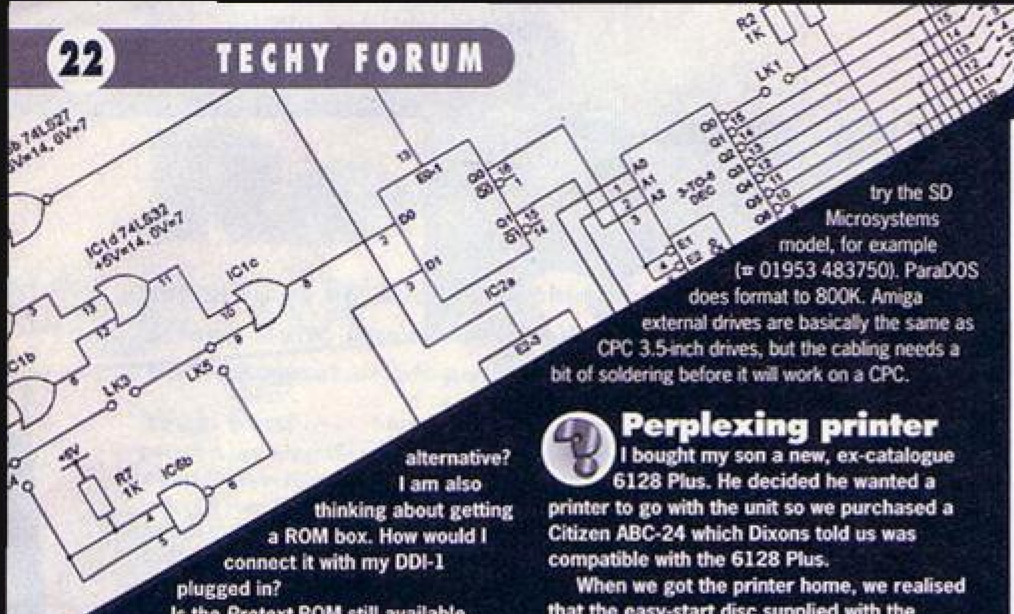
Is there any way I can convert the word processor to a CPC to load a game like Monopoly?

Also, I read the comms article back in AA105, but the PC emulator is not applicable.
George Hales, Coventry

The *PCW Plus* team (we share an office) will be warning us off their turf at this rate!

With regard to Monopoly, and indeed any program run from BASIC, the answer is, sadly, no. For example, how would a PCW run a colour CPC game? Neither is it realistic to perform any surgery on the PCW to turn it into a CPC.

However, if you have any CP/M software on either computer – it will usually be PD – such as the word-processor *VDE* – it should be freely interchangeable between the two machines. You might even like to try and impress upon your daughter that second-hand CPCs are very good value at around £30 these days!



alternative? I am also thinking about getting a ROM box. How would I connect it with my DDI-1 plugged in?

Is the *Protext* ROM still available, from Arnor or any other supplier?

Do you recommend the DES ROM? (Please say yes, as I want to show this to my mum.)

Is it possible to build your own ROM box? I am a very good instruction follower, although an electronics novice.

My final batch of questions...

I am thinking of getting a 3.5-inch disc drive. If I get ParaDOS, will this format 800K? Which drive do you recommend? Would it be possible to use an Amiga's external drive and still use it for the Amiga?

John Herbert, Harlow

There are plenty of PD copiers available – you could be forgiven for thinking that the PD scene never comes up with much else, in fact. Try the German utilities *Disc'o'Magic* or the slightly unreliable *Crime*. Alternatively, *ParaDOS* on ROM does all this and much, much more.

A ROM box comes with a through connector, so you simply slot your DDI-1 in behind it. *Protext* is still available, try OJ Software (☎ 01257 421915). DES is a very good buy for CPC novices and those who find using the standard RSXs to perform disc operations tricky, although advanced users won't find much use for it.

Get *ParaDOS*, and (if you send an A4 envelope) instructions on how to build your own ROM Box (see pic above and on page 21) from CampurSoft, 10 Mcintosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW ☎ 0141 554 4735.

Most 3.5-inch drives are pretty much identical, although it's best to get one with a side switch on it, try the SD Microsystems model, for example (☎ 01953 483750). ParaDOS does format to 800K. Amiga external drives are basically the same as CPC 3.5-inch drives, but the cabling needs a bit of soldering before it will work on a CPC.

Perplexing printer

I bought my son a new, ex-catalogue 6128 Plus. He decided he wanted a printer to go with the unit so we purchased a Citizen ABC-24 which Dixons told us was compatible with the 6128 Plus.

When we got the printer home, we realised that the easy-start disc supplied with the printer was of the 3.5-inch variety, so we decided that we would get an add-on 3.5-inch disc drive.

With the help of *Amstrad Action*, we decided on one sold by Siren Software. However, I still cannot play the instruction disc on it. So, try as I might, I am stuck with a printer which I can't get to print anything other than the demo sheets, and by using PIP, which only prints as I type, digit for digit.

I really do need some advice before I smash the whole blasted thing up.

RJ Angell, Cheshire



As easy as... except it's not.

I don't like to tell you this, but you didn't really need to buy the 3.5-inch disc drive... The easy-start disc is intended for IBM-compatible PCs, not CPCs. There's no way this disc will work on your 6128 Plus, even if the disc size is the same. However, you'll be pleased to know that printing from your Plus is in fact very easy.

As you have obtained some success from CP/M's PIP command, it seems that the printer is plugged in correctly with the right lead. So let's say that you want to print the words 'Hello world'. Switch on your printer and 6128 Plus, select Amstrad BASIC, and type PRINT#8, "Hello world." The sentence should appear on the printer. You can do the same with any sentence you like and word processors like *Protext* and *Tasword* should also print happily to your Citizen.

To get effects like bold and italics, though, you need to set the printer into Epson-compatible mode – check the printer manual for how to do this. Sadly, graphics printing on 24-pin printers, like yours, is generally not well catered for by CPC programs, so you'll have less luck with *Stop Press*, *Advanced Art Studio*, and the like. You'll still find the 3.5-inch disc drive useful, especially now that 3-inch discs are nigh-on impossible to buy at reasonable rates.

Covertape clinic



Art breaker

I have a 464 Plus. When I load the 464 version of your covertape program (*AA107*) *Picasso*, the program loads okay, but the screen definition is poor. When the crosshairs are moved to the menu icons the menu bar appears at the top of the screen but the text is unreadable.

I bought this as a back issue.

Campbell McDougall, Renfrew

The 464 version, confusingly, is intended only for original CPC 464 users who don't have a fill routine built into ROM, unlike all CPCs since. Load the 6128 version (the same goes for 664 users, by the way), and you should be okay.

TOP TIPS

Secret code

If you've tried to list any of the recent covertape loaders you might be puzzled to find a tiny program consisting of one machine code CALL and a RUN statement. A cursor-controlled menu replete with *AA* logo can hardly be crammed into two lines of BASIC, can it? And, as for the transfer to disc routine...

The covertape menu, unsurprisingly, is actually written in machine code. There's no other way of doing the tape-to-disc code, and it makes for a friendlier display. However, there are reasons for wanting it to be a BASIC program: one example is that loading BASIC programs (as some covertape programs are) from a machine code menu would be well-nigh impossible.

The solution, then, is to have a BASIC program CALLing a machine code routine. Usually, this would be done either by loading in the machine code from disc, or poking it in from DATA statements. For reasons of speed and space, though, the machine code in the covertape menu is contained in the same file as the BASIC.

A BASIC program starts at address &170. With a short (two-line!) program such as the menu, it's over by &1A0: use a monitor (such as Maxam) to see where the first free part of memory is. This is the ideal place to locate your machine code routine. The only problem is combining the two and saving them out into one file. You could write a special routine to load both files in and save them out together, but it's arguably easier to PEEK and copy out the bytes making up the BASIC program (from &170 to &19F, for example), and then insert them using defb at the start of the machine code source file.

To finish off, you need to make sure that the file in question is marked as BASIC, not machine code. Again, you can write a special program to load it in and save it out with filetype 0. If you're just doing a one-off, though, you might as well take a Sector Editor to the first sector of the file, replace the 02 in the header (binary file) with 00 (unprotected BASIC), making sure to decrement the two-byte checksum at bytes 67 and 68 accordingly, and save the sector.

Software at a snip



David Crookes buys an armful of newsprint, unsheathes and sharpens his scissors, and hopes that the first cut will be the cheapest.

A lot of the letters that *AA* receives concern themselves with the non-availability of CPC software. You've got a greater chance of getting a squeal of enjoyment from watching Denis Norden's attempts at humour than finding a major chain store with a blast of CPC software.

The way ahead for some time now has been mail order. You know that there is an abundance of top quality independent software producers springing up at a raring rate, but did you know that you can buy a vast range of CPC goodies cheaply? Here are some suggestions to help you find the bargains...

A cottage industry has grown up around the second-hand market, after all if that is the only way you can get hold of software then so be it.

● Advantage: the gear is dirt cheap, so cheap in fact that you could get hold of eight second-hand budget tapes for the price of a brand-new one. Why buy new when a used one is just as good?

● Disadvantage: not many people know of these services so are missing out. However, not you, and not now, we hope.

AA's Angela Cook has set up Merlin-Serve, a business selling second-user software and equipment at the lowest prices possible. Angela, hit upon a beautiful concept. She looked at the situation of the time and decided that if brand-new software was not being released then the only option was to gather up lots of second-hand gear and let you delve into the wares and come out with a bargain.

The service is brilliant. This is quite a diversion for *AA* because I don't think we have ever reviewed a software supplier before, but what the heck, you need to know.

The service is magical

Fast and friendly are the key words surrounding Merlin-Serve. So many people are put off from ordering second-hand software from individuals that a service such as this should help non-trusters to get in on the act. You could say it is the best thing to happen to the CPC in years.

Angela has lots of cassette games for only 50p, many disc offerings for £3, quite a few pieces of hardware, magazines and spare parts. In short, you should find a bargain. She even buys your unwanted stuff and consider swaps – a good way to clear your shelves and let others take advantage of your unneeded goodies.

There's more. Angela's dad runs a PD library called King Arthur's Domain so you could do all your shopping in one go. (Better than QVC – the shopping channel – too, not least because there's something of interest to you in it.)

WACCI, that infamous club, has set up a Market Stall for its members.

"Which market is that located in?" 1001 readers up and down the country are asking themselves. Well when it says Market Stall, it is actually a reference to a page that is set aside in WACCI for members to sell their excess software and hardware and plead for wanted goods. It's a bit like *AA*'s small ads except that people who place wanted ads are recorded and matched to sellers so, as WACCI Editor Paul Dwerryhouse says,

"He who wants, talks to he that has."

The publication *8BIT* (formerly *8-bit Mart*) provides an magazine devoted to adverts. This is not a pure second-hand fest but there is a large amount of classified advertisements which may provide just what you are looking for, at ridiculously cheap prices. It's worth taking a look.

Don't be had

What if you don't like buying things second-hand for fear of getting rubbish in return for your cash? There is a risk when you buy used goods that what you receive has been played about with so much that it has become as worn as Damon Hill's tyres.

Members of the two major user groups, WACCI and the United Amstrad User Group (UAUG), can claim a discount on a potpourri of goodies from respected softies such as SD Microsystems and CampurSoft. All you need to do is subscribe to either one of the clubs and save stacks of moolah.

Then, there are the *AA* reader ads (see page 15). They are free, they cover the whole CPC scene, and because they are a section within *AA* you get a bargain before you even start putting biro to grid.

What are you waiting for?

Bargain hunters start here

CampurSoft 10 Mcintosh Court, Wellpark, Glasgow G31 2HW
☎ 0141554 4735/fax 0141 227 4486

King Arthur's Domain, Brympton Cottage, Brunswick Rd, Worthing, Sussex BN11 3NQ
☎/fax 01903 206739

Merlin-Serve (address as above)

SD Microsystems, PO Box 24, Attleborough, Norfolk NR17 1HL ☎/fax 01953 483750

UAUG, 26 Uplands Crescent, Fareham, Hants. PO16 7SY ☎ 01329 234291

WACCI, 7 Brunswood Green, Hawarden, Deeside, Clywd CH5 3JA ☎ 01244 534942

8BIT, Harrowden, 39 High Street, Sutton-in-the-Isle, Ely, Cambs CB6 2RA
☎ 01353 777006





In *AA* small (ads) is beautiful.

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AA106: Covertape: *Zynaps, Spriting Back*. Inside: The easy way to animate your graphics, the complete beginners' guide to printers. Reviews: *Making Music*.
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